

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

August 1997

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Disaster planning for animals increases

"It is up to each of us to determine to what extent we can respond to the needs of animals during a disaster. This will depend on our resources and whether we are a large or small organization."
(Peggy Allen, Virginia Federation of Humane Societies)

"One issue for us is the bond between our elderly and special needs people and their pets. We need to deal with them and their pets. Their animals are all important and may be the only things they have left."
(Joe Kight, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services)

"What really brought the issue home to me was when my wife said she wouldn't evacuate without our three dogs."
(Robbie Symons, Deputy Emergency Services Coordinator, Rockingham County)

Recent disasters have highlighted the importance of planning for animals because of public health, economic and humane reasons. In line with this thinking, FEMA has begun to stress the importance of incorporating disaster planning for animals into local EOPs. This article examines the steps that Florida and Virginia's Rockingham County have taken to meet this need.

FLORIDA

Florida's emergency management system was thoroughly tested by Hurricane Andrew. Experiences during that disaster led the state to develop Emergency Support Function 17 (Animal Protection) which is now incorporated into the State EOP. The lead agency, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is now assisting counties to include similar planning in their own EOPs.

"Animals have the same problems as people after a disaster," said the department's Joe Kight. "They need food, water and medical attention. You have to deal with it."

In addition, disasters can affect a state's animal industry which can have considerable impact on its economic well-being. Florida has over 350,000 horses, a large dairy industry — with the average farm handling between 600-700 head of cattle — and a large livestock population.

Kight pointed out that his department is working to educate these industries to prepare for disasters. Some of his efforts include encouraging the dairy industry to acquire backup generators to help cut their financial losses after a disaster. He is helping counties with large horse populations develop plans to protect their animals before a disaster occurs.

Hurricane Andrew pointed out the need to develop safe methods for animal carcass removal. Currently, Kight is

working with the counties to identify disposal sights such as incinerators and landfills.

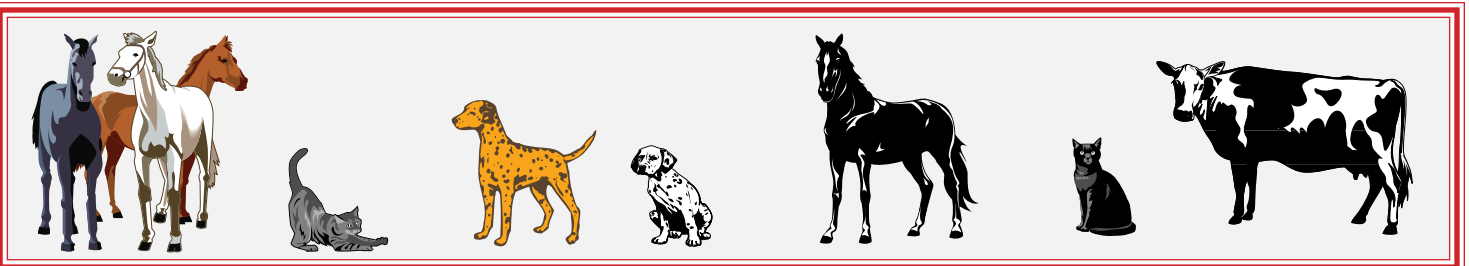
Kight observed that a little preplanning could save the emergency manager a lot of headaches. "People are going to save the animals," he said. "You need to have a plan in place so you don't need to 'save the savers.'"

On the local level, Volusia County's animal control manager, Bill Foster, explained that he has been working with the Red Cross to set up a shelter of last resort where pet owners can stay with their animals. The county fairground was chosen because it can hold both large and small animals. "The 'last resort' shelter was tested during Hurricane Bertha," said Foster. "It worked very well and we sheltered about 20 people and 50 animals."

With the involvement of the humane societies, animal control, extension services, livestock agents and the Red Cross, the county developed an animal protection plan which is now incorporated into their EOP, Foster explained.

VIRGINIA

One of the many problems Rockingham County grappled with during Hurricane Fran involved stray animals. A large number of them were dogs and cats which had either escaped or been let loose by people who had evacuated their homes
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Survey indicates Virginians don't feel prepared

"Denial" still describes the mindset of Virginia's citizens in relation to weather disasters. According to the recent Commonwealth Poll conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University's Survey Research Laboratory, a majority of the 803 respondents across the state — 59 percent — felt it unlikely a weather-related disaster would occur in their community.

The poll also indicated Virginia's citizens did not feel prepared to face a disaster. Over half of those questioned had not planned where they would go if advised to evacuate and had not practiced

what they would do in the event of a disaster. Eighty-three percent of participants either felt somewhat prepared or unprepared to face a weather-related disaster. Only a small number expressed strong confidence in their level of preparedness.

"The survey results make it clear we need to keep drilling in those awareness messages — telling people what hazards are likely to occur and what they should do to prepare," said VDES Public Information Coordinator, Janet Clements.

"Even though many Virginia localities



have been hit by disasters over the past several years, people are still in denial and have the mindset that 'it won't happen to me.'"

Marketing research shows the public does not take action — such as making a disaster supplies kit — until it hears the message an average of 22 times. To be effective, the message needs to come from a variety of media sources and it needs to be consistent. Repetition is the key to a successful preparedness campaign.

For a copy of the survey or for more information, call Janet Clements at 804/674-2499.

Disaster planning for animals increases

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during the flooding. Emergency services workers had their hands full keeping distraught pet owners from entering affected areas to search for missing pets.

Robbie Symons, Deputy Emergency Services Coordinator, described an aspect of the problem that many areas in Florida dealt with head-on during Hurricane Andrew. "This (issue) is important because you've got people who aren't going to leave their homes without their pets, particularly the elderly," he said. "Fran was a double-edged sword. You're dealing with the

possible loss of human life because people won't leave unless they can bring their pets. So — in order to save the life — you need to deal with the pet."

Symons is working closely with Peggy Allen, coordinator for disaster preparedness development with the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies. They are planning to use the county fairgrounds as an animal shelter and hope to staff it with volunteers from the 4-H Club or the SPCA and provide them with initial training.

They have involved the county extension agent, local kennel clubs, the Fair Associa-

tion and animal control officers in their planning efforts. Symons has already included the local animal control officer and the SPCA on his resources list. Both these organizations are represented in the EOC during disasters and deal with all issues related to animals. Although he has just begun to approach this issue, Symons ultimately plans to create an annex to the local EOP that deals with both livestock and pets.

Allen has put together a *Disaster Planning Guidelines* packet that is designed so any animal shelter in the state can

use the information, regardless of its resources.

"Probably one of the most important points I can make is that animal shelters statewide have been provided with this packet," said Allen. "Emergency managers can work with these people as resources because they have the experience, the basic knowledge and the tools to deal with animals during disasters."

For more information, call Robbie Symons at 540/564-3175 or Joe Kight at 904/488-7079.

For a copy of Volusia County's EOP, call Bill Foster at 904/736-5919.

Resources to assist with disaster planning for animals

▲ FEMA has included in their newly issued *Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning* an entire section devoted to disaster planning for animals. It suggests which organizations and agencies should be involved and who should take the lead on animal care and control during and after a disaster. Download a copy at <http://www.fema.gov/home/pte/gaheop.htm> or call 800/480-2520 to order one. Ask for publication SLG 101, item # 9-1051.

▲ The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has developed the *Emergency Preparedness and Response Guide*. This exhaustive plan offers guidance for the development of local and state plans that integrate with the

Federal Response Plan. It offers model animal care annexes for both state and county EOPs and takes an all-hazards planning approach that deals with livestock, pets, wild animals, exotic animals, laboratory animals and zoo animals. The cost is \$55. To order a copy, call Nancy Fritz at 847/925-8070, ext. 289.

▲ The *Disaster Preparedness Guidelines* that Peggy Allen has put together contains disaster planning tips, various kinds of forms — such as animal identification, release and registration forms — a list of resources, guidelines for setting up animal relief centers, a multi-hazard checklist and more. To order this \$5 packet, call 540/434-5270.

HAZ MAT



Tractor-trailer incident successfully resolved

(Last month, incident one was described — an accident involving an overturned tractor-trailer, 35,200 pounds of lead stearate and some unfortunate consequences. This month, incident two is examined as a success story for local and state hazmat teams.)

On May 7 of this year, Fire Chief Miller Farris from the Newbern Volunteer Fire Department in Pulaski County, contacted VDES Hazmat Officer Bobby Clark to request assistance. A tractor-trailer was lodged on a 100-foot embankment on Interstate 81 near Radford.

The accident occurred when the driver of the tractor-trailer lost control of his vehicle after swerving to avoid hitting a car that cut in front of him. The truck crashed through the guardrail on the southbound lane and went down the embankment — carrying 44 super sacks of a hazardous waste sludge from an electroplating operation. None of the 1,000-pound super sacks were ruptured and, miraculously, the truck remained upright.

“Our challenge was to get the truck off the embankment without further damaging the truck or the load,” said Clark. In a three-day operation that involved a total of 17 state, local and private-sector agencies and organizations, the

tractor-trailer was safely moved downhill to a nearby road running parallel to the interstate.

To accomplish this, two cranes — weighing 40 and 60 tons each — were brought in to lift the trailer. Work crews welded steel beams to the trailer’s underside to support and stiffen its body and to provide lifting points for the two cranes.

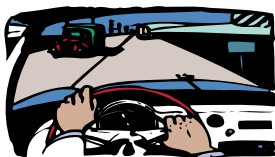
Once the rig was on the downhill road, “They hauled

the tractor away, brought in an undamaged one, hooked it up to the trailer and it went on its way to

Pennsylvania,” said Clark. “Chief Farris and his team did the right thing. They weren’t sure whether the load was damaged and, instead of opening the truck up and checking it themselves, they decided to call in more expertise.”

Protecting the safety of all involved in the response was a foremost priority. Through daily safety briefings, everyone knew what the operation would entail and what roles they would play as it unfolded.

The Incident Command System (ICS) was implemented almost immediately and served as an invaluable tool to help keep the event manageable and organized. “The use of the ICS greatly enhances organization of the
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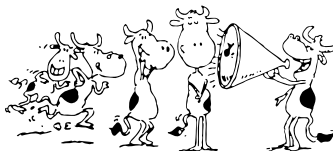
scene and provides for accountability of all involved,” said Clark. He observed that, because decision making under the ICS is a group effort, it also served to help balance the commercial interests of the trucking company against the public safety issues that concerned local and state government.

Grady DeVilbiss, the on-site DEQ representative, pointed out that the scene presented unique regulatory issues as well. “Because a hazardous material isn’t flammable, radioactive, glowing or exploding, doesn’t mean it can’t potentially contaminate the environment and surrounding neighborhoods,” he pointed out. “It takes a lot of experience to determine what regulatory playing field we’re

on and those guidelines determine response and cleanup levels.”

Stanley Crigger, Pulaski County’s Hazmat Officer on site, offered this advice: “First and foremost, you need to notify the proper people to get hold of the situation. The solution has to be cost-effective, which is why it’s important to get the insurance company involved early on. They need to know up-front what the costs are. We covered all aspects — everyone knew exactly what we were going to do and why and how we were going to do it. There was a lot of risk involved with this incident. When you’re dealing with hazmat, you want the outcome to be good and you need to have a definite plan.”

Hazmat conference covers “partnerships”



The millennium approaches as does the 1997 Virginia Hazardous Materials Conference.

From September 24-27 at Virginia Beach, you’ll be

able to take the first step toward developing a “Partnership for an Incident-free Environment.”

This year’s event is sponsored by the Virginia Association of Hazardous Materials Response Specialists, VDES and TRANSCAER — a nationwide community outreach program in the field of hazardous materials transportation. You’ll be encouraged to further your working relationships with your peers in the private sector, the military and the federal government.

You know what to expect from this conference and you know you’ll get it! Some offerings include the traditional high-quality workshops from which you can earn college-level continuing education credits, management-level classes in responding to terrorist incidents and advanced training in the use of CAMEO software, to name a few.

For more information, call Commonwealth Conventions at 757/491-2800 or visit the Hazmat Conference Internet site at <http://www.state.va.us/~des/hazmat.htm>

TRAINING

The Disaster Recovery Center Operations class, scheduled for September 4, has been canceled.

Exercise Design

September 10-11

Chesterfield

For information, call the VDES Training Office at 804/674-2458

Technological Hazards Division

Public Safety Response to Terrorism

August 13

Roanoke

Hazardous Materials Technician

October 13-24

Ashland

For information, call the VDES Tech Haz Division at 804/674-2510

Virginia Hazardous Materials Conference

September 24-27

Virginia Beach

For information, call Commonwealth Conventions at 757/491-2800

In conjunction with the Hazmat Conference, the following classes are offered:

Public Safety Response to Terrorism

September 22

Virginia Beach

Public Safety Response to Terrorism/Management Considerations

September 23-24

Virginia Beach

For information, call the VDES Tech Haz Division at 804/674-2510

Advanced CAMEO Training Workshop

September 24

Virginia Beach

For information, call George Roarty at 804/674-2708

Conferences

NCCEM Annual Conference

September 13-16

Tempe, Arizona

For information, call 703/538-1795

EPA Region III Chemical Emergency Preparedness & Prevention Conference

December 2-5

Pittsburgh, Penn.

For information, call Al Brown at 215/566-3302



National Alert Broadcast

August 20

2:00-3:30 p.m.

This month's show features a short piece on managing donations to avoid a "second disaster." For more information, call 800/527-4893, 301/447-1068, e-mail: sue.downin@fema.gov

Internet sites of interest

During the hurricane season, FEMA's "Tropical Storm Watch" Internet page is a handy information source for your citizens. It offers hurricane preparedness information, fact sheets, maps and links to other key weather sites with satellite images and forecasts.

The site is updated daily — sometimes hourly, if weather conditions warrant — with situation reports, tracking maps and informational graphics. Check out this user-friendly site at <http://www.fema.gov/fema/trop.htm>

You're a citizen and you have the right to know. The RTK Net, an Internet site funded by various government agencies and foundations, was started in support of the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA). It's a gold mine of information for emergency services groups, particularly LEPCs.

The online newsletter will bring you up to speed on this organization and all that it offers. You can access a variety of government databases on the environment and other topics. To keep up on policies or information technology as it relates to the federal government, link to OMB Watch or The Unison Institute, the two nonprofit organizations that maintain this site. Visit: <http://www.rtk.net/>



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Access the VDES homepage at:
<http://www.state.va.us/~des/des.htm>

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